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ABSTRACT

George Beauchamp's 1968 book, "Curriculum Theory," stresses the importance of developing subordinate constructs, or theoretical relationships, with other components of education, until ground rules are laid down through meanings ascribed to the term "curriculum". According to Beauchamp, theories have three functions: to describe what is going on, help predict what will happen in given situations, and explain things that have already occurred. Beauchamp's four levels of theories are: categories of theories; theories in the applied areas of knowledge; subtheories in applied areas; and sublevels to the theories within the applied areas. The Course Development Model ties curriculum and instruction together and is based on Beauchamp's ideas concerning curriculum theory. It states that faculty should use course descriptions contained in college/university catalogues to develop their course objectives. From course objectives, they should develop their tests based on a taxonomy of educational objectives to ensure that materials being evaluated are being done using the correct instrument. Figures are included. This document contains 4 references. (SM)

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Bridging the Gap Between Curriculum and Instruction: A Look at Beauchamp

by

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George Beauchamp in his 1968 book, Curriculum Theory, says: "From a theoretical point of view, it is important to develop subordinate constructs, or theoretical relationships, with other components of education, until ground rules are laid down through meanings ascribed to the basic term 'curriculum.'"[1]. Beauchamp's message is most important to those of us in the field of training and education. Theories are not simple academic abstractions designed to cloud the unknown, but are sincere attempts to either philosophically or empirically explain events which in fact do occur or are thought to occur. They provide us with a baseline upon which we can build understanding.

Beauchamp further states that theories have three functions. First, they describe what is going on. Second, theories help us to predict what will happen given certain situations. Lastly, theories explain thing that have already occurred.

George J. Moulay said that a good theory must have four characteristics. A theory must permit or allow for interpretations which can be empirically tested. By this he meant that a theory must provide the means for its own interpretation and verification. The second aspect of a theory is that it must be compatible with observation and previously validated theories. Third a theory must be stated in simple terms. Finally, a theory must be scientific. Thus, it must be based on empirical facts and relationships.

Beauchamp's work brings the above into perspective. All too frequently we forget the Gestalt of things. The end is greater than the sum of its parts. Curriculum is greater than its components. Instruction is greater than its components. These two are only a few of the aspects that Beauchamp brings together simultaneously for our review.

In order to understand the significance of this work, for me at least, one must understand that according to Beauchamp theories have four levels. At Level I are the categories of theories, for example the theories of 'natural sciences.' The second level contains theories in the applied areas of knowledge. In this case it includes the theories in education. Level III includes the subtheories in those applied areas. In education these would, according to Beauchamp, include theories of administration, theories of counseling, curriculum theories, instructional theories and theories of evaluation (figure 1.). What is important to note is that although these theories sometimes overlap they are on the same plan and can, therefore, be addressed separately. If one choses one can simply ignore the other subtheories on the same plane. There is nothing to bridge the gap between them. This is significant! When we study curriculum, for example, we study its theories. We do not necessarily study its relationship with theories of instruction. Thus, the basis for my dissertation and Beauchamp's relevance to it. The fourth level of theories are the sublevels to the theories within the applied areas. In the case of curriculum theory this includes: design theories, procedure theories and content theories.

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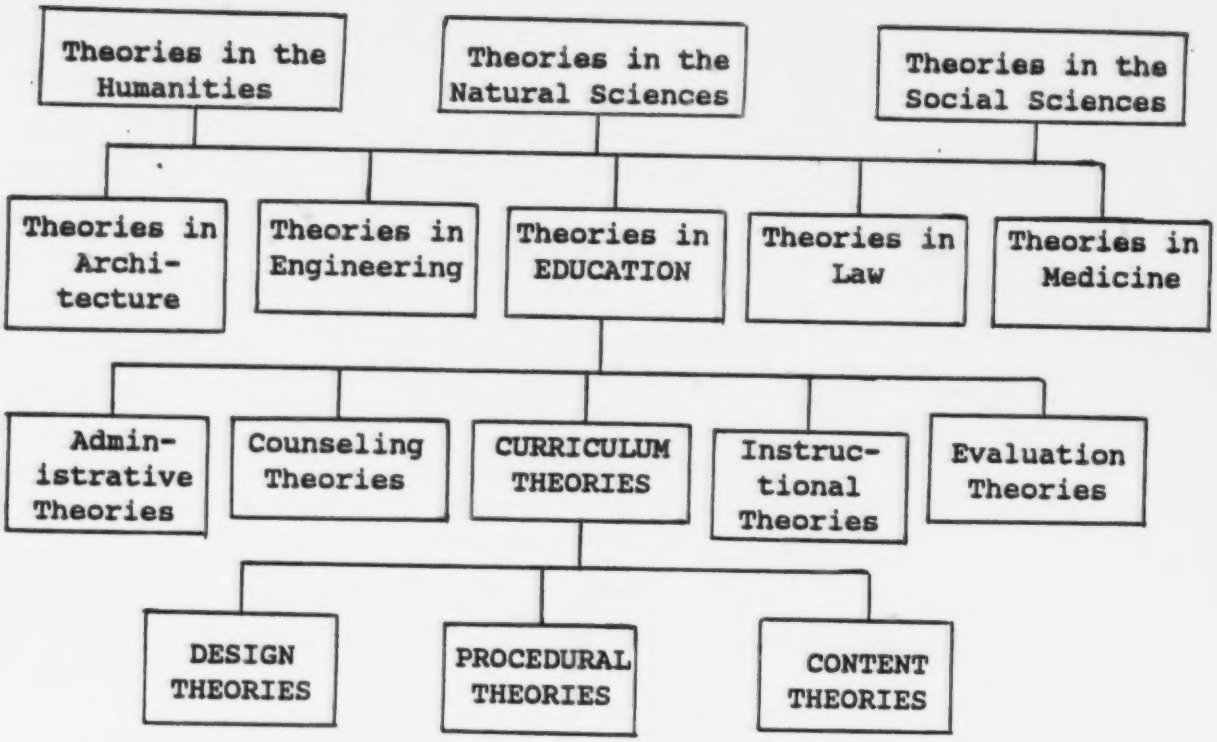

FIGURE 1

Beauchamp provides us with a diagram (figure 2.) depicting what he calls "the dynamic cycle of schooling." The cycle begins with the Goals. These goals lead directly into the means which are agents for accomplishing or attaining the goals. In education there are two classes of means these are curriculum and instruction. The output of these two is evaluation which enables us to determine the adequacy of the two means in achieving the desired results. Beauchamp reminds us that curriculum and instruction are inseparable and must be evaluated together. To evaluate either one alone is to miss an important element of the educational process.

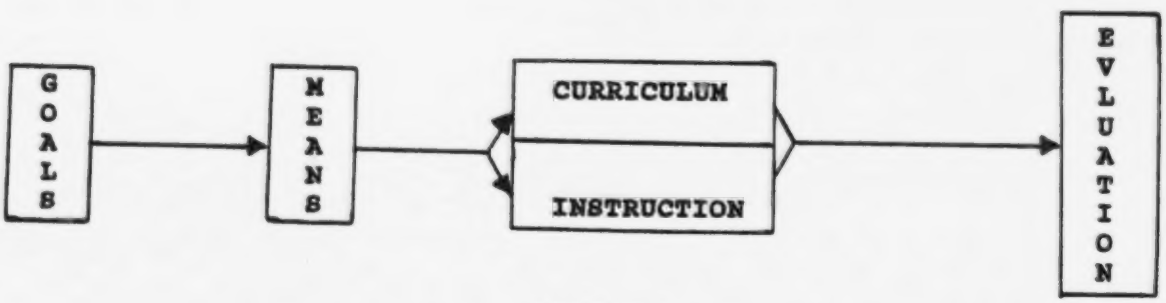

FIGURE 2

Since Beauchamp identifies for us the relationship between Curriculum Theory and Instructional Theory how do we bridge the gap which exists between the two? How do we accomplish this theoretically, and how do we accomplish this practically? These questions are particularly important in the area of higher education.

The solution is a model. Models are all around us. They exist even when they are not diagrammed. They exist whether we use them or not. The procedures we use to accomplish almost any task, is in reality, a model for accomplishing that task. The model we must use to tie curriculum and instruction together, then, must be based on theory, be verifiable and be verifiable.

The Course Development Model (figure 3.) is all three of these. Beauchamp has helped to crystallize this model and give it substance. It conforms to other previously validated theories. Beauchamp provides the baseline. Simply stated the Course Development Model states that Faculty should use Course Descriptions contained in college/university catalogues to develop their course objectives. From course objectives faculty members should develop their tests. Tests should be based on a taxonomy of educational objective such as Bloom's and Krathwohl's. Next, faculty should obtain and use reliability data as a means of evaluating the entire educational process.

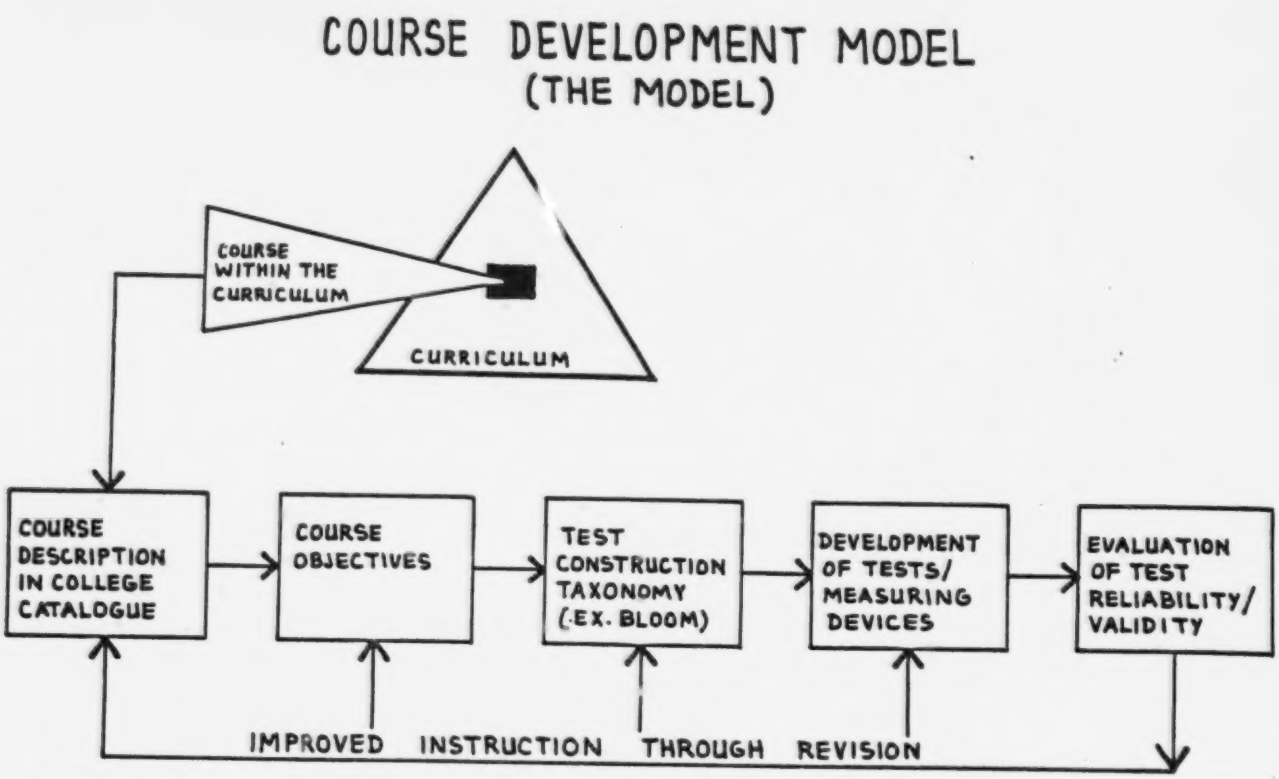

FIGURE 3

The use of a taxonomy will insure that the materials being evaluated are being evaluated using the correct instrument. It does not make good pedagogical sense to evaluate high level cognitive functions at the knowledge level. The purpose of using reliability data in evaluation is to provide the faculty member with information to make corrections in the curriculum, at the objectives level, or in the instruction, or where ever necessary. Adjustments are part and parcel of the educational process.

The Course Development Model, incidentally, has been validated at UCF. In the Spring of 1985 a pilot study was conducted via a survey of the faculty. Data analysis first in terms of a log linear analysis showed that there is a linear effect of the elements of the model on each other. Second a stepwise regression confirmed the log linear analysis, although the effects of the elements were not always strong. Finally, a path analysis (figure 4.) showed the strength of each element on the successive elements. The importance of this information, if confirmed in my dissertation, will be a means for tying curriculum to instruction, a tool for the improvement of instruction and an additional input to the faculty evaluation/accountability process.

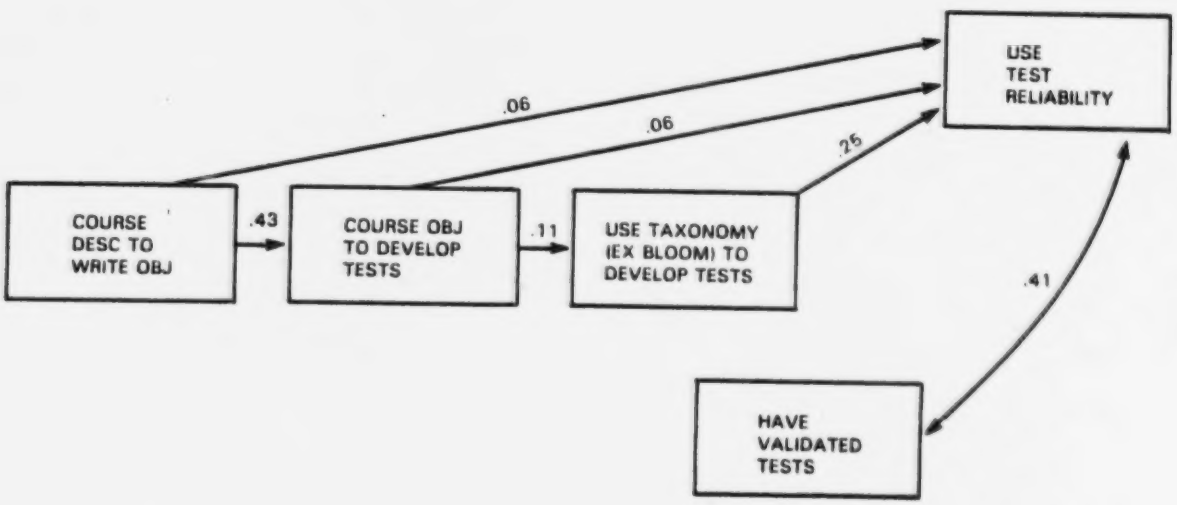

FIGURE 4

Beauchamp's book, Curriculum Theory, provides more than an understanding of curriculum. It illustrates the relationship of Curriculum to Instruction and thereby provides us the basis for bridging the gap between the two. His work also helps us to better understand the necessary ingredients of a theory as well as how to verify one. He has provided, in one book, a surprisingly large amount of understandable information which is invaluable to anyone working in the field of education and training.

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